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EDU 402

Background Statement

Being born and raised in Portland, Maine, I am a living product of Portland Public Schools, which expected and taught all students from elementary to high school how to be a functioning and successful member of society. Beginning in elementary school, I was taught how to quietly listen and how to follow directions. Those basics skills were translated to a middle school setting, where I got a foundation of knowledge to apply to high school. All throughout middle school, the expectation of students was to build successful behaviors in preparation to high school. Once I got to high school, the expectations shifted from simply following direction to preparing for higher learning, because almost every teacher or administrator I engaged with in high school set the expectation of going to college. I attended Deering High School has a very diverse student body, representing all types of ethnicities and socioeconomic levels.

The expectations of my parent’s involvement in my education were stronger in elementary school and lessened as I went throughout high school. Expectations went from volunteering in or outside of the classroom to elementary school, to simply signing my progress reports when I was a freshman in high school so I could turn them into my homeroom teacher. I lucked out with my parents, who remain influential to my education today. Growing up, education was taken very seriously by my parents, which is ironic because they both dropped out of college to pursue different career paths. Despite their own educational journey’s, my parents did not give me an option in not receiving a higher education. This belief translated into how I perceive my own educational experience and what impact it has on the business world.

One day after middle school, I told my mom I wanted to be a teacher, and it just stuck. Since then, both my parents supported and pushed me to do well in high school, apply to college, and get a degree in something that I was passionate about. I sincerely believe that without going to UMF to receive a teaching degree, I would not have the tools to become a successful educator and make in impact on society and in turn the

My expectations for my own education intensified once I was in high school. I was placed in honors classes of history and English. I took any extra curriculum I could regarding social sciences, because that’s what I found the most interesting as a student. My classes were set up like any traditional high school. I had an average class size of around twenty to thirty students. I had four classes each semester, making up a block schedule that changed halfway through the year, totaling in eight classes a year. I found that this schedule worked well for me, and was one of the reasons I chose to attend Deering High School. A majority of my classes were physically set up in individual desk rows, that sometimes the teacher would change depending if we were working individually or in groups.

A majority of my high school classes were taught through outdated textbooks. Many of the strategies my teachers used during instruction were reading the assigned textbooks, filling out a corresponding worksheet, doing a project or paper over the course of the semester, and taking a final at the end of the semester. I am fortunate that most of my social studies teachers were big on collaboration. I enjoy working in groups with peers so that was a strategy that met my needs as a student. I gained a lot from the classes that allowed for more organic and creative outlets for students to express their learning, because summarizing a book into an essay felt repetitive and boring to me, especially when I was in high school.

A setting that I had a genuine joy for learning was in an elective psychology class in high school. I had an amazing teacher that was very honest, down to earth, and personable with each student in our class. There was nothing really distinct about her teaching style or method, but I found the content and topics covered in her class very interesting. I found myself always looking forward to psychology class and the lectures and discussions we had in her class.

Aside from daydreaming about psychology class, I took a plethora of different classes throughout the course of my high school education. I took many different classes in social sciences such as, psychology, sociology, street law and current events, and history classes. I also took many art classes in high school. I love to express myself artistically and found myself enrolled in many different classes such as painting, jewelry making, and sculpture. One aspect of Deering that I really enjoyed was the diverseness in classes offered to students. Looking back with the knowledge I have now of education, I wish I had taken more AP classes, which I was recommended for, but doubted myself as a student too much to take them. I believe that I did form two meaningful connections with teachers while I was there, which enhanced my learning in their particular classes, but I feel as though the teaching methods and strategies of my high school teachers were very outdated and not engaging.

I think my background and history regarding my own educational experience will impact my approach to teaching in my professional career in a number of ways. Mostly, I want to provide a save environment for my students, and really focus on creating meaningful connections with them. I experienced too many teachers who simply sat at their desk, or stood by their chalkboard teaching content for the whole class and assigning hours of homework reiterating content. It seemed like most of the teachers I had, especially in high school were just teaching to collect a paycheck, and didn’t seem to mind if a student was having trouble in their class or falling behind. I want to take that experience, and do the exact opposite. I want to engage my class everyday. I want to be relatable to my students, make them laugh and think critically about the world and society they live in.

I have selected teaching as a profession because I have always loved being around kids ever since I can recall. My first job was teaching horseback riding lessons and because I had an extensive knowledge of horses when I was younger, teaching kids about them came naturally to me. My favorite part before riding was teaching kids how to saddle a horse. I would walk them through the whole process, showing them what to do, and then ask them to show me if they could exhibit the same skill. It was always so rewarding for me to see their eyes light up once they realized that they could tighten a girth, or that they were capable of bridling a horse. At a very young age, teaching children skills whether it was about horses or not, gave me a type of fulfillment I had never encountered in my life before. Teaching kids about horses definitely first inspired me to become a teacher, but my motivations have definitely shifted since then.

I have a passion for social studies, and I believe it is important knowledge for everyone to possess. Because social studies is such vast content area, it is applicable to everyday life. Since kids are forming their opinions and belief systems in secondary school, I want to make sure that their opinions and beliefs are informed. I believe that witnessing students form their identities and become themselves is a truly remarkable process and I cannot wait to witness and hopefully be apart of that personal experience.

Some characteristics of a superior teacher consist of creating a community within a classroom where students feel safe and respected. I want to foster a classroom setting that have those characteristics so students feel free to express opinions or ask questions that may otherwise be unorthodox. I see myself implementing these traits in my classroom by being honest with my students, and trying to foster relationships with my classes.

I hope to gain the pure enjoyment of being around kids all day from being a teacher. My passion for children is something that was instilled in me at such an early age, and if I can give students a greater understanding or help them make sense of their surroundings, then that will be fulfillment enough for me. I also hope to gain challenges. Being a teacher and continuously having the implement different strategies, content, or offer emotional support to students can be tough, but results can be so rewarding. I am hoping to express my love for children, while teaching them something, and welcoming the challenges they present me with.

I hope to contribute enthusiasm to the profession of teaching. As stated earlier, I have experienced so many teachers who have simply taught to collect a paycheck. I want my students to know that there are teachers that exist who wake up each day excited to go to school, interested in how their day is going, and asks questions that can become a foundation of a mentoring relationship.

Some fears, concerns, and questions I have about the profession are making the social studies standards entertaining for students. I want to teach them material that is exciting, and a delivery can only go so far. I am concerned about having resources available to me as a new teacher, regarding content. I don’t want to teach out of a history textbook. I want to build upon an engaging collection of materials and resources I can use in my own classroom to have my students appreciate aspects of social studies just as I once did when I was a student.